



# Resilience for Ministry

## The Gathering: Waikato

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# The shape of our time together

1. Resilience and the desert
2. The resilient disciple: Falling
3. The resilient disciple: Faithful
4. The resilient disciple: Fruitful

# 1. Resilience and the desert

- Acknowledge and explore the demands on our lives as ministers
- Introduce you to the research into the processes of how people can be strengthened in adversity – develop resilience
- Explore how the biblical metaphor and experience of desert can provide a vision for resilience for us and our ministry

# 1. What is resilience?



Why do we need to be resilient?  
How might we deal with adversity?



# Irritable clergy syndrome

The syndrome occurs as a result of clergy attempting to be nice to everybody all the time

parishes are a "toxic cocktail" of bad behavior, full of parishioners with "neurotic personality disorders bordering on the psychotic."

Coined by Sara Savage in

'on the analyst's couch: psychological perspectives on congregations and clergy' in

*The Future of the Parish System* ed by

Steve Croft (CHP 2006)

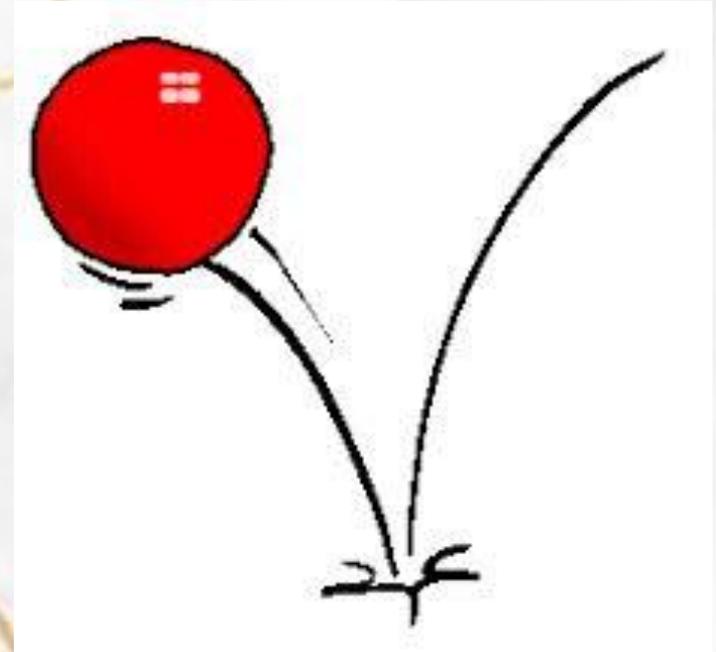
# What is resilience?

Being strengthened  
in adversity

Physics

Psychology

Empirical studies –  
children, teenagers,  
survivors



# What is resilience?

## 3Cs

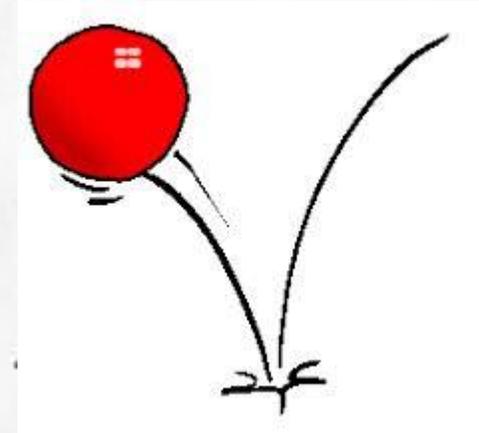
- **Coping**
- **Constancy**
- **Construction**



# Resilience

Coming through adversity well, strengthened

- By embracing the struggle
- By attention to the self awareness, esteem, resourced and disciplined
- By healthy relationships



# Desert as a place and metaphor for difficulty



# The desert as teacher

From silenced to silence

From indifference to support

From change to stability



# The desert metaphor in the bible: from adversity to altruism

Our forebears in Faith

List them!



# The desert metaphor in the bible: from adversity to altruism

1. The desert - adversity
2. The process of strengthening
3. Pastoral responsibility - altruism



# Bible study and discussion

## Hagar and Moses – studies in resilience

Hagar Genesis 16:4-15, 21:9-21

Moses Exodus 1 and 3

1. What is the adversity?
2. How do they encounter themselves and God?
3. What life does it lead to, what legacy?
4. How could you use the desert theme in your ministry to enable people to grow in resilience?



St Anthony 251- 356

A white martyr

The wisdom of the desert

## 2. The resilient disciple: Falling

· *Patterns of 3: falling, faithful, fruitful*



Falling



Peter denies he knows Jesus (x3)



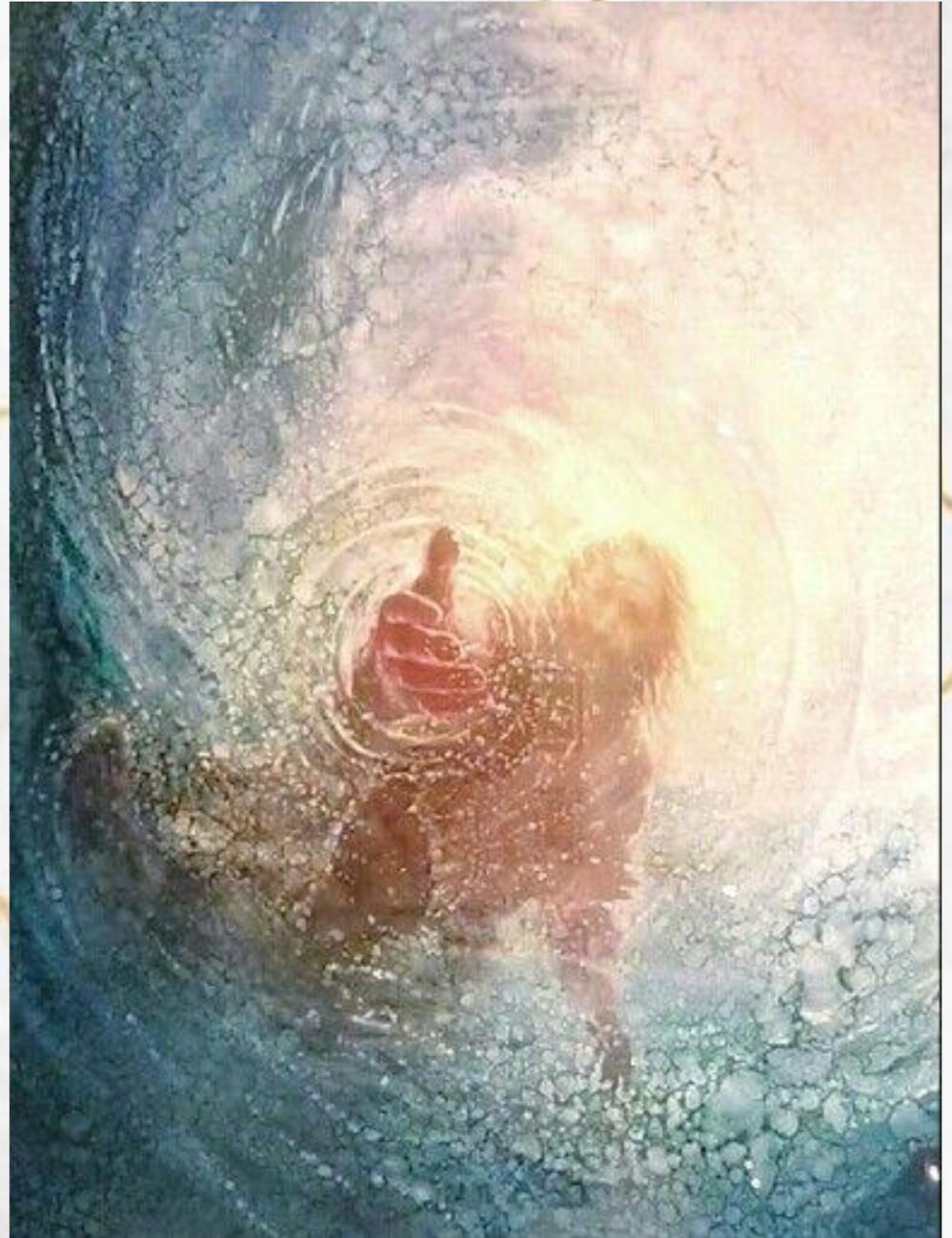
There's a crack in everything  
that's how the light gets in

Leonard Cohen





realising  
remembering  
reaching out  
returning



# Falling

What kinds of falling are experienced by

Ministers

Local churches

The church

- Where are the wake up calls?
- Can the cracks let light in?

# Unknown and unconscious forces at work

- Unknown to you when you approach a new parish, pastoral encounter

Wounded history  
Conflictual patterns

- Unconscious forces at play:

Projection

Transference

Countertransference

List what you have discovered in the churches you serve

# Falling: prayer

- The welcoming prayer

The serenity prayer

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me... Psalm 23:4*

- Physical, mental and spiritual

### 3. The Resilient Disciple: Faithful



Jesus asks Peter: Do you love me more than these?  
(x3)





Jacob and the angel  
Jacob Epstein  
1940

# What about him?

John 21:15-23

Follow me



Ready to be used again

Follow me

And a new call: Feed my sheep



Shift from evangelist to pastor



# A shift, a new call for Peter, for you?

## **Rock**

What has God called you to be?

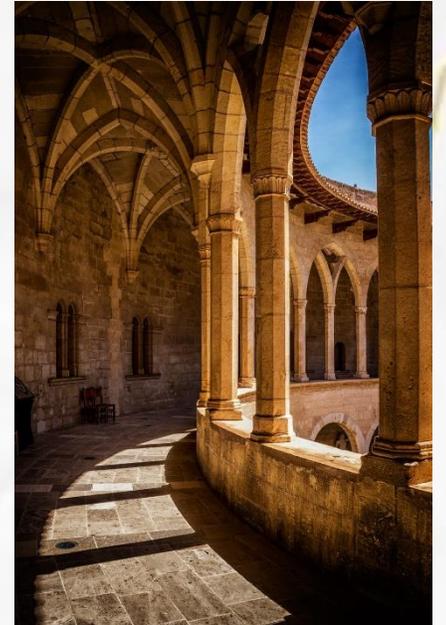
What struggles are there around this within yourself, in your role?

## **Nets**

What skills have you brought to this role – are they celebrated and used, by you, by others?

## **Keys**

What wisdom are you to unlock within yourself, for others?



# Faithful: prayer

*You are with me, your rod and  
your staff they comfort me.*

*Psalm 23:4*

Be thou a bright flame before me

A guiding star above me.

A smooth path beneath me

A kindly shepherd behind me

Today and always

St Columba

# Discussion

- Conversations which can heal



How might your style of bringing about apologies be open to bringing about healing?

- Our own patterns



- Do you notice repeating cycles in your life or the life of your church be invitations for healing and growth?

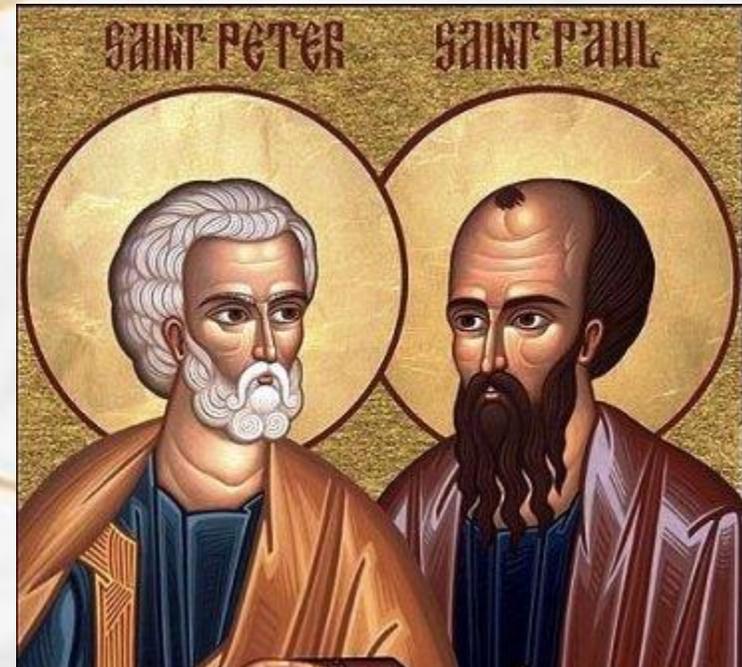
## 4. The Resilient Disciple: Fruitful



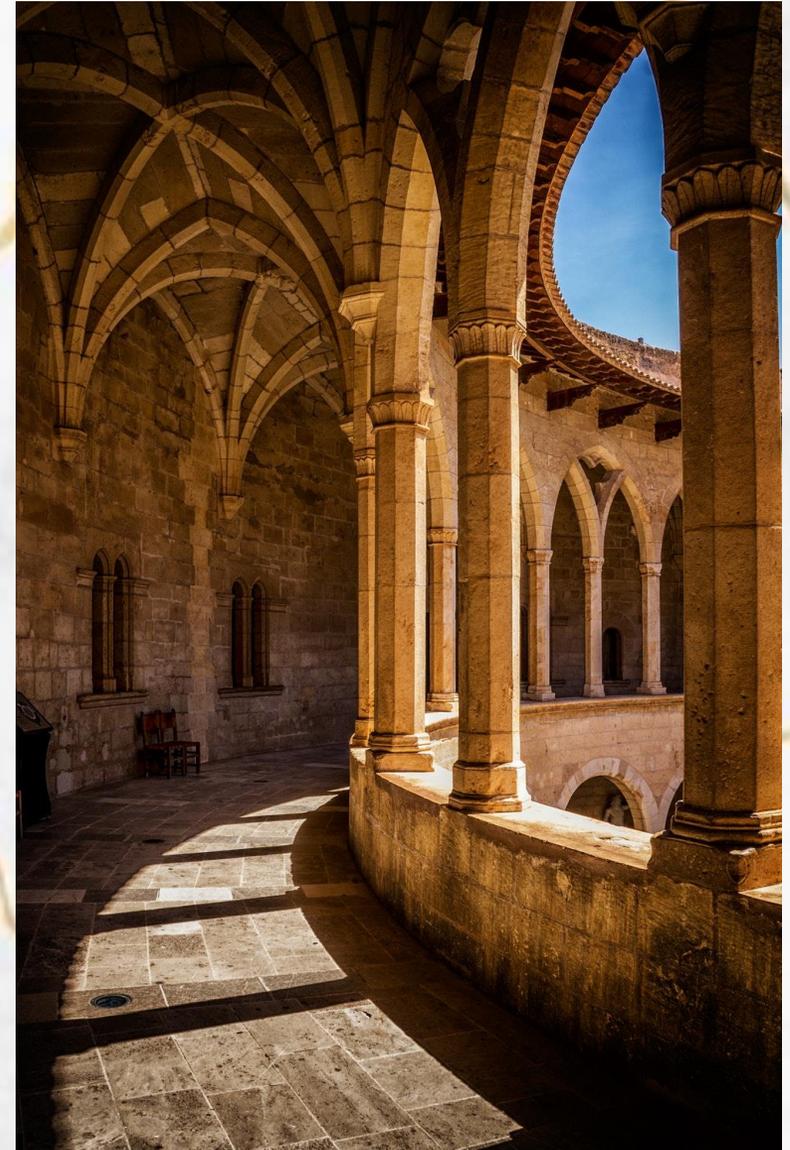
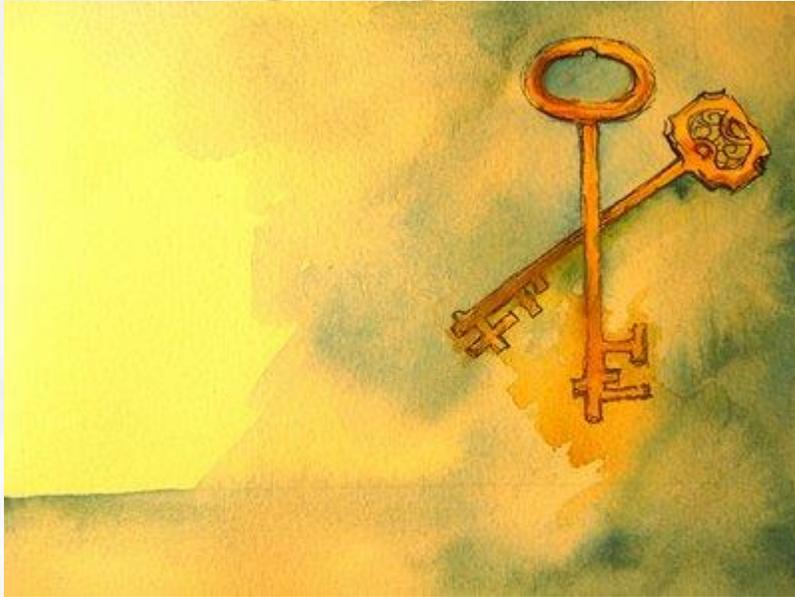
To Peter, the voice said again: (x3)  
What God has made clean you must not call profane



# Healing and humility



# Leading with wisdom



Free



Fruitful: prayer

Abide in me

*You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies ; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows Psalm 23:5*



# Marks of maturity

Seasonality

Bearing emotional pain



Our story  
our patterns

## Paying Attention



shifts, grace  
and inspiration

In ministry

At any one time ....

Healing from the past

Care in the present

Preparing for the future

*Ministering in this diverse context*



# Building the house of your life



- What do you need?

Roof, walls, windows

Door

Doormat

Fences

Pictures

Flowers



# The pet corner of vice and virtue



Wise as serpents, gentle as doves



# The vice of Acedia



# Building the house of your life



- A house
- A home
- For hospitality



# A spirituality of resilience?

- In adversity

## Coping

Awareness, embrace the struggle,  
healthy relationships

## Constancy

Self discipline and resourcing

## Construction

Build the house of your house

# In ordinary time... live by the wisdom of the desert



- Seeing your mentor  
spiritual director,
- Taking time away
- Exercise
- Relationships of mutuality